



NEWS RELEASE

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Rep. John Lewis Asks Congress to Address Needs of Foster Children

Today the U.S. Congress will vote on a bill sponsored by Rep. John Lewis which calls attention to the needs of foster children, especially those who age-out of the system. H. Res. 1208 discusses the plight of the 12,000,000 children who matriculate through the foster care system. Every year 24,000 of those children reach the age of 18 and pass out of the care of the system, never having been adopted or claimed by any family.

That means these children have to face their adulthood singlehandedly with no family support to teach them how to manage finances, get a job, apply for college, find an apartment, get health care or build families of their own. Once these children reach 18, all assistance, guidance, and even medication they've received suddenly ends. Without some kind of critical support systems, many children become homeless or end up in jail. The bill acknowledges the resilience and determination of these children to meet daunting obstacles to build lives for themselves on their own. It encourages Congress to recognize the needs of these children and use its power to determine how the federal government can assist their transition into adulthood.

Rep. Lewis made this statement on the floor:

Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume. I rise today to ask my colleagues to support H. Res. 1208.

This resolution is very simple. It recognizes the many problems that face young people who spend time in foster care, and it thanks the many others who work to ease their transition from foster care to adulthood and independence.

In Georgia, there are thousands of children in foster care. Living in foster care is not a choice. These young people -- of all race, ages, and backgrounds -- were victims of neglect and abuse. Child welfare services share a common goal of finding safe, stable, and loving homes for these young people. Unfortunately, this dream is not always realized.

I have the privilege to serve on the Ways and Means' Income Security and Family Support Subcommittee chaired by my friend and colleague, Mr. McDermott. Last year, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDermott) invited two young people from my congressional district to testify about what it is like to transition from foster care to adulthood.

(more)

Anthony Reeves and Shalita O’Neale both ‘aged-out’ of Georgia’s foster care system. They shared with us how difficult it is to find housing, health care, education, livable wage jobs, security, and stability. At a young age, when most are still relying on financial and emotional support from their parents and family, these young people had no one to fall back on. Madam Speaker, these are the stories that break your heart.

Today, we honor those like Anthony, Shalita, and Kevin Brown – a recent Clark Atlanta University–graduate, who are determined to find their way despite so many obstacles before them. We also pay tribute to the mentors, the volunteers, the parents, organizations, and many others who fill in the gaps in federal and State coverage to help these young people during the most difficult times.

Most importantly, this resolution sends a message to the half a million young people currently in the foster care system. Congress tells them, “You are not alone. We love you; we support you. You are not forgotten; there is hope. You will survive, and you will succeed.”

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I urge all of my colleagues to support this very simple resolution. And I yield back the balance of my time.

May is Foster Care Month.

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